Attendees: Chris Weakley, Jan & Dave Curtis, Cindy Fithian, Kathy McCrea, Mary Summers, Adam Honeysett, Judy Moats, Amanda Halstead, Andrew Hunter, Karen Kleiber, Larry Roth, Alexis Kassim, Tom Ross

Larry Roth, Moderator-Elect opened the retreat with a brief discussion on our church governance and suggesting four core principles:

- Communication
  - Clarity
  - Transparency
- Organization
  - Logical
  - Clear
- Responsiveness
  - Able to react with due speed
- Efficiency
  - Lack of Redundancy
  - Elegant

Larry emphasized that this is the beginning of the discussion and of a process that will go to the full church council and congregation over the next few months.

Participants worked as three groups to identify and diagram what they perceived to be the current operational structure of Little River. These results were shared with the group at large, followed by a general discussion. Each group then developed the following problem statements and solutions:

**Group A:** The problem of our current operations is that it negatively affects our ability to focus on ministry. The impact of which is the inability to engage the congregation fully, including the boards and committees, leading to a lack of trust, frustration and missed opportunities.

A successful solution would ensure that operations empower our ministries.

**Group B:** The problem of communication affects our ability to make decisions efficiently and quickly, manage and empower our staff, and engage all of our congregation. The impact of which is a lack of engagement, over-burdened volunteers, staff frustration, and hinders our agility to act on our faith-driven missions.

A successful solution would include improved communication to provide clarity between boards, staff, and congregation. Open communication would build trust and enable decisions to turn into immediate action.

**Group C:** The problem is structural inefficiency to meet our mission statement. The impact is a lack of trust, communication and inclusion of the greater congregation.

A solution would increase efficiency, simplicity, and transparency so that it begins to build trust.
Options for change:

The goal of the exercise was to identify what people thought would be necessary steps to take, in order for each of the options to be successful. Four options for change were originally suggested, but later revised to three as listed.

These included:

1. Keep the existing Church Governance Model (Governance/Ministry Board, Church Council) with modifications.
2. Strengthen the existing Church Council; eliminate the Ministry & Governance Boards
3. Develop an entirely new governance structure

Option 1 Maintain the existing model with modifications

This would work if…….

- Ministry & Governance Boards had clear, meaningful responsibilities and ability to receive and share input before decisions
- Governance & Ministry are empowered to make final decisions
- Make moderator-elect Chair of Ministry Board and give vote to Senior Pastor
- Committee structure was streamlined and communication dramatically improved
- Focus is on ministry, guided and informed by Governance Board knowledge
- Individual communication to others in congregation
- Ministry Board focuses on more than establishing a church calendar
- Add “at-large” member to both ministry and governance
- Direct line of communication between governance and ministry re: budget formulation
- Agenda is clarified with pastoral staff input in advance of meetings
- Transitions to new leadership (boards/committees, governance, ministry) are given guidelines on past/present responsibilities and actions
- Share agendas prior to meetings
- Authority to make decisions at appropriate “levels” is actually done
- “Time-cap” regarding decisions and $ allocations
- Major decisions are prepared in draft and can be considered by all affected persons/groups before actually being finalized.
- Staff input is sought and welcomed.
- Council meets only when necessary
- Strengthen and clarify the role of the Personnel Committee with more representation from committees/boards
- Terms were less than three years
- At large members need portfolio & active roles
- Review of voting members (positions) on church council, Governance and Ministry Boards

Option II Strengthen the Existing Church Council; eliminate Governance and Ministry Boards

This would work if…….
Finance Committee reconstituted.
Meeting materials available in advance
Council allows responsibility for routine decisions to be made by Boards & Committees.
and time “cap” for finalizing decisions/authorization/allocation.
Communication outside meetings made more open & efficient
Meet every other month with “virtual” meeting as needed
Consider sub-committees on hot issues
Committees delegated authority & responsibility and to consult and collaborate with other committees, then decide
Clear communication within committees on council meetings so substitutes who may be attending are informed and prepared for meetings.
Number of committees change/more ministries started
Meetings are focused on matters that require action; not “reports” for info
Meet at least every two months
Meetings are for decision making
Attendance (representation) is consistent
Figure other meeting times than weekday evenings.

Option III Develop an entirely new governance structure

This would work if....

- It creates a rational & efficient system
- It fosters openness & communications
- If volunteers authentically commit time and effort to the long process
- There is broad spectrum of engagement & involvement
- It involves members of the congregation who are not on boards & committees
- It held spots for youth
- Understandable, efficient & accountable
- And decision making re authorization and allocation of $ have a “time/cap limit”
- Fewer “committees” more ministries.

Conclusions and other actions

Participants were provided two dots and offered the opportunity to identify preferences among the various three options. The consensus was for Option I (Maintain the existing model with modifications). There was minimal support for Option II, strengthening the church council and eliminating the Ministry and Governance Boards as well as Option III, developing an entirely new governance structure.

Pastor Alexis Kassim also made a suggestion that other UCC churches in our area who have made changes to their governance structure be analyzed to determine any applicability to LRUCC.

The meeting summary will be submitted to the entire church council and next steps considered.

Other Council Action

Pastor Alexis offered a proposal to have Kathy Heyman (Office Administrator) attend the next Governance & Church Council meeting (June 12) and serve as recorder, taking notes in place of the absence of a Church Clerk.
Kathy has offered her services and it was recommended that she be paid for her time attending the governance/council meetings. All present were in favor of this.